



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

45TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

MICHAEL J. BARRASSE

JUDGE

The Honorable Michael J. Barrasse
Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania

Testimony in Support of SB 660 -- An Act Requiring Drunken Drivers to Maintain a
Period of Continuous Sobriety

Good morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Michael J. Barrasse and I have been a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania for 9 1/2 years. Prior to my appointment to the bench, I began my career in the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office where I became First Assistant District Attorney and Special Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. After serving as a Senior Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia's District Attorney's Office, I returned to the Lackawanna County D.A.'s office where I was cross designated as a Special Assistant United States Attorney General for the prosecution of drug cases. I have been a member of the National Judicial College Judicial Fellowship for DUI Courts, past president of the Pennsylvania Drug Court Professionals, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center.

The Court of Common Pleas encompasses the county's DUI Court. Since 2004, I have been using continuous alcohol monitoring technology in my courtroom. The minimum monitoring period is 90 days. On average, there are approximately 180 offenders being monitored. The underlying principle in using this type of monitoring is to afford treatment to the defendant and accountability for the public and address the root cause rather than just the effects -- which will lower recidivism. One of the most important decisions I have to make when an offender is in front of my court is how to best mitigate risk and avoid future alcohol-related violations by this individual. By putting the alcohol offender on Scram, I am confident that I am doing the most I can to protect the safety of my community, and know that this person will now be continuously monitored round the clock. It is a more efficient way to sentence, rather than just a punitive way to sentence.

A continuous alcohol monitoring device acts as an around - the- clock drinking deterrent. I have found that this technology combined with treatment is the best path to recovery and reduced recidivism. I have seen a large decrease in repeat DUI offenders since utilizing continuous alcohol monitoring and treatment.

Based on my experience in successfully utilizing continuous alcohol monitoring technology in my DUI Court, I strongly support SB 660. The bill gives the judge much needed sentencing discretion to reduce the mandatory minimum in exchange for a extended period of sobriety proven by this technology. This proposal is directed to the most serious of drunk drivers – second, third and subsequent DUI convictions. The only way to truly reduce the risk of this population reoffending is effective treatment that can only be achieved through an extended period of sobriety. Continuous alcohol monitoring technology is the only way of accurately monitoring chronic alcohol offenders. Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimonial on this matter.

If you need any further information, I can be contacted via telephone at 570-963-6452.